



From August 2021 (Volume 118)





September 2021

Yes, the photos in this book date back to August and, as usual, I am catching up. I had printer troubles and this is now with a new printer, but I have a feeling the older, 'cheaper' one was superior. Time will tell.

Since the last 'Photo History' volume, we have actually started to travel again and we went to Chichester to see South Pacific (staying overnight in The Old School House, and then we stayed in the Granary in Great Bealings, Suffolk. We spent a day with Alan and Monica on their narrowboat followed by a great trip to Spain with Ivor and Judy. Immediately after this we went to Midsomer Norton and Weston Supermare to see DP, Angela, Binky and the kids. Almost seems like we are making up for lost time.

Lynn is looking great and she seems to improve with age...like a great wine. She is so encouraging in everything I do and we laugh and share so many special fun times together. If this is getting old...I can only recommend it. Tammy has a pretty full life too with Larnie at her side and working from home she is a really fantastic person and they share a very special bond. This seems to radiate through our family because DP is so special and very 'full of life' and sharing his time with the delightful Binky and also relating so well to Angela is a pretty unique situation. Angela is fascinating in her outlook on life and a wonderful inspiring other to Beau and Peachy. They have grown into two wonderful young folk and Beau is very thoughtful and we get on so well. Likewise, our Peachy has blossomed into a very pretty young lady and again we get on so well. Our extended family in Berlin and Israel are also constantly in touch and there seems to be a real family bond there as well.

Covid seems to be accepted and very different attitudes now prevail. Some places insist on masks still whilst other gatherings like markets, street theatre, sports etc sees masses of people crowded together. Our Spain trip was totally confusing. We had to arrange a delivery of lab test kits to home prior to travel then fill in on line a Spanish entry document which required loads of info including dates of double vaccines we had had plus we had to arrange tests over there. We then had to complete on line forms 48 hours before departure. Easyjet then had a mountain of form/barcodes to check and we had to do the return form requirement on line before we left followed by tests on our return which were sent off via 'drop boxes' miles away. Negative results (fortunately) were then emailed to us. Staycations seem even more attractive now.

The economy is obviously suffering (as expected) with price rises everywhere and taxes and utilities set to increase. Schools are temporarily functioning but everyone is on tenterhooks awaiting lockdown being required again if covid cases show marked UK increases. Lots of new words have entered our vocabulary recently.....pandemic/lockdown/pinging/ social distancing/double doses/staycation/essential worker/Vaccine passport/traffic light system.....and many more. These are not actually new words but have taken on new meanings

Ironically, today there is news that the flight restrictions regarding documentation may be changed. Undoubtedly with representations from the tourism industry because we have had friends saying they are certainly not going through all these problems and likewise, we wouldn't entertain it again.

Rent freezes and furlough payments plus universal credit extra payments are all set to end very soon and many will be terribly effected and this is shameful as it hits the people (in most cases) who can ill afford it. I wrote about this on more than one occasion.

Another major UK problem just made itself felt is the lack of HGV drivers. This has caused supply shortages in shops and major fuel shortages in all garages. Massive queues are now commonplace but we feel this is just panic buying and will soon ease up but meanwhile tempers are on knife edge and more problems are forecast. A town visit yesterday revealed many familiar restaurants have closed down permanently and in Devon staff shortages caused many hospitality venue to remain closed..in what is potentially their busiest season.



Photo History



Lynn and I took a walk in Enfield from opposite King & Tinker and saw this poor pony who had got caught in his too-short tether and was tied up in the equestrian stable. Lynn had a go at the person in charge who reluctantly untied it



...not the most attractive walk and the footpath went through fields and over the M25 where one could see the city in the distance



...however the wild flowers made up for the distractions





Aug '21 was Ivor & Judy's 55th anniversary and they invited a small crowd to help celebrate on Barge East on the river at Hackney wick. It was a really good meal and the venue was great fun





The lovely Steve



..and my lovely missus



..the ever-smiling Lynn



....and the equally-lovely Cyril with yours truly



Fame preceded my arrival



Photo History



Viv in pensive mood



Mari & Judy



Double trouble...The two Lynns



...yes, Barbie is really that much taller



Danny with the drink supply



BARKNEY WICK. CAFÉ...Humans
as well as dogs welcomed



We went to Chichester in August to see South Pacific, which was a really well produced performance. We stayed overnight in The Old School house again and were made really wel-





Photo History



This old wreck is an example of the wooden hulls that will not be around for much longer



Morning coffee at the marina





The estuary is a very tranquil area to walk round and the tide makes a real difference in a very short period





Photo History



The Old School House B&B in Chichester
where we have stayed before



Above Goodwood race
track...The windy Trundle



We stayed with Julian and Leah at The Granary near Woodbridge in August and had three great days walking and enjoying the Suffolk countryside





We sat here for ages just watching the tide slowly filling the small pools with Woodbridge in the distance







On this beautiful estuary walk we met fishermen and birdwatchers







Photo History

Leah's wonderful breakfast
at The Granary





At the start of a long walk
from Woodbridge harbour
along the estuary





We walked a great deal in Suffolk and were treated to wonderful weather and some amazing scenery.



The town of Aldeburgh probably hasn't changed much over the years (except for the cars)



The beach at the end of the town has swallowed up many streets over the years and we walked to the Martello Tower. This is the largest and most northerly of the chain of towers put up by the Board of Ordnance to keep out Napoleon. Built in the shape of a quatrefoil for four heavy guns, nearly a million bricks were used in its construction.





We thought this couple sitting on the deserted beach watching the waves crashing down was a really evocative shot and we did the same





Snape Maltings was our next port of call . The buildings themselves were nothing special but the situation on the nature reserve of whispering reeds and the meandering river was very atmospheric (see the video)





Photo History



Orford Ness is on the Suffolk coast; it is **the largest vegetated shingle spit in Europe** and stretches for about 10 miles (16 km) with a maximum height above sea level of around 4m (13ft). To the west the spit is separated from the mainland by the River Alde-Ore. We watched the tide rising and covering these small flowers before it receded again



It is a fascinating place and we found out some of its history so I have copied a small precis of this information





Just to the north, the coast at Aldeburgh including part of the town, has been drowned over the years, while the Ness (ness means promontory or projecting ridge) has narrowed and lengthened. The fortunes of the medieval port of Orford, once benefitting from the shelter of the spit, declined as the deposits of shingle and other material extended and shifted, making the approaches to the harbour more difficult. Orford Ness is tenuously linked to the mainland at Aldeburgh, but separated from it by the River Alde to its immediate west. So it is in theory accessible from Aldeburgh, across a narrow piece of the spit, but I have no idea what the terrain is like and, in any event, a locked gate bars the way. The only official access deemed possible to Orford Ness is by means of a small ferry from Orford Quay; an adventure itself.

The process of longshore drift has resulted in a series of shingle ridges and gullies (swales), each ridge marking a previous, perhaps ancient, shoreline. The nature of shingle normally means that plants can't take root for long, if at all. However, at Orford Ness, relative stability has created the largest vegetated shingle spit in Europe, which supports rare and highly specialised flora. The intervention of man has long impacted upon the unusual landscape too. Saltwater marsh developed around the shallower in-shore areas of shingle. In the late 12th century, possibly initiated by the builder of Orford Castle, Henry II, banks were thrown up to form pasture where livestock could graze. The banks – or walls – protected the grazing land from seawater flooding and, consequently, freshwater marshes were created in the low-lying ground. It is likely that an area on the Ness known as King's Marshes is named after Henry. Reclaimed marshland has also been used for arable farming. Over the years, including relatively recently, lagoons have been formed where material has been removed by man to build and repair flood defences. These so-called 'borrow pits', full of brackish water, provide yet another perfect environment for certain species of wildlife.

Orford Ness was uninhabited for centuries, apart from marshmen tending their livestock. Local folk would come to gather eggs, oysters, hunt wildfowl or launch fishing boats from the beach. Smugglers are rumoured to have worked these parts – and probably still do. But the waters off Orford beach can be treacherous, shelving deeply, with dangerous currents just a few feet off shore and shifting shingle and sandbanks ready to entrap unlucky sailors. During one great storm in 1627, thirty-two ships were wrecked off Orford Ness. Light houses were installed, but they too were lost to the hungry sea. The present Orford Ness lighthouse was built privately in 1792 by Lord Braybroke, and was taken over by Trinity House, Britain's lighthouse authority, in 1837. It was in service until quite recently, but decommissioned in 2013 due to erosion of the beach and will one day join its predecessors at the bottom of the North Sea; For obvious reasons, the lighthouse was only operated when needed during both World Wars but, interestingly, it was apparently used as a navigation aid by both Allied and German pilots. The encroaching sea eventually got so close that the lighthouse had to go. Rather than simply let it fall into the sea, in July 2020 the entire building began to be carefully dismantled so as not to have any impact on the surrounding sensitive environment. The Orford Ness Lighthouse Trust plan at that time was to remove the lantern room as well as other original features and artefacts with a view to one day creating a lighthouse memorial of some sort on the other side of the Ness, facing Orford town's quay.

On 30 June 1853, one of the first submarine telegraph cables was laid from Orford Ness, to Holland.

Any traditional use of the Ness by locals ended when the military moved in. In 1913, the War Department (now the Ministry of Defence) acquired a large part of Orford Ness for the construction of an airfield. In 1915, the Experimental Flying Section of the Central Flying School transferred there from Upavon, in Wiltshire. By 1918, 600 staff were living and working on site. The type of work undertaken included testing new aircraft, the development of parachutes, bombs and gun sights, aerial combat tactics, aerial and high-speed photography, camouflage and navigation. In the 1920s, the Ness was used as a firing and bombing range by the Aeroplane and Armaments Experimental Establishment based at nearby Martlesham Heath.

There was a POW camp on site in the First World War – German POWs as well as Chinese Labour Corps personnel constructed flood defences. Toward the end of that conflict, a 100 foot span hanger was erected for the new twin-engined aircraft then under development and a 600mm gauge military railway was installed to carry stores and equipment and, sometimes, personnel. A slightly larger 2 foot (610mm) gauge railway was constructed on the site during the 1960s.

In 1933, a Bomb Ballistics Building was constructed, for the purpose of observing and recording the flight of bombs in order to improve aerodynamics and bomb aiming. This was state of the art stuff; and the building is still there.



Possibly some of the most significant experiments conducted at Orford Ness took place under the auspices of the Ionospheric Research Station, set up by the brilliant Robert Watson-Watt in 1935. At a meeting of the Committee for the Scientific Study of Air Defence, it had been suggested to Watson-Watt that radiation – actually, a ‘death ray’ – could be used to stop enemy aircraft. Watson-Watt rejected this as impractical with the technology available at the time, but suggested there was potential to use radio waves as a detection system. So the Ionospheric Research Station was a cover for the development of the radio-detection system that briefly became RDF (Radio Direction Finding) and that we now know by its American acronym as Radar (RADio Detection And Ranging). The first ever purpose-built Radar masts were installed at Orford Ness in 1935; built by Harland and Wolf of Belfast, they were 250 feet (76.2 metres) high. Watson-Watt’s team moved to nearby Bawdsey Manor in 1936, from which the chain of stations that would be deployed ahead of World War Two, and which played such a decisive role in the Battle of Britain in 1940, was developed. Without the work undertaken at Orford Ness, the history of the world would have been very different.

Between 1938 and 1959, aircraft ‘Lethality and Vulnerability’ trials were undertaken at Orford Ness, assessing the vulnerability of various aircraft to attack, with a view to improving protection. One experiment involved shooting at aircraft from all angles with a .303 rifle, one shot at a time, meticulously recording each shot.

During the Second World War, German as well as Allied aircraft were tested. Once the machines had been finished with, airmen would apparently scrounge bits of leather and metal, to make souvenirs like belts and cigarette lighters, which they could perhaps sell.

Inside a building known as the Plate Store, sheets of experimental armour-plate were bombarded with projectiles, to see what worked – and what didn’t.

In addition to accommodation and testing buildings, there were machine shops, a refrigerator station, a battery shop, photo-processing facilities, stores, look-outs; this was a big complex. Presumably, there was some kind of defence force too –

This was a Royal Air Force facility during World War Two, but after 1945 Orford Ness seems to have been handed over to the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE), a government research organisation that had various names and roles during its lifetime. In 1953, the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE) moved in and appears to have had exclusive control of the site from 1959.

This is the shadowy period we know as the Cold War. Despite Britain’s crucial contribution to the US-funded Manhattan Project during World War Two, which produced the world’s first nuclear weapons, wartime collaboration in this area ended after the death of President Roosevelt in 1945, when the Americans refused to share further atomic information. Despite Britain’s perilous economic state at the time, and despite the ambitious commitments made by the new Labour Government, including the creation of the National Health Service, in 1946 a secret cabinet committee decided that Britain should pursue its own, independent, atomic programme. Very few people, even in government, knew of this decision and work proceeded in the utmost secrecy. Britain’s first atomic bomb was detonated on 3 October 1952 in the Monte Bello Islands off the north-west coast of Australia.

Orford Ness is one of the few places known where purpose built facilities were created for testing atomic weapons and their components. *Blue Danube*, Britain’s first atomic bomb, was lowered by crane into a specially-constructed pit to be tested. Tests were designed to imitate the extreme conditions such weapons would be subjected to prior to detonation – vibration, high temperatures, shocks, G-forces. It has always been maintained that no fissile material was involved in tests, but high explosive initiators were present and any accident could have had devastating consequences. So far as we know, there were no accidents. Of course, it is comforting to read that buildings were designed to absorb any accidental explosion, allowing gases and other material to vent and dissipate in a directed or contained manner. In the event of a larger accident, the roofs were designed to collapse onto the building, sealing it with a lid of concrete and shingle. Such tests were remotely controlled.

Orford Ness also had an experimental rocket range to record the flight path of air launched rockets and, in the 60s, a Hard Target Impact Facility was built. This tested time-delay fuses mounted on a rocket-propelled sledge running on rail tracks launched at a high-density concrete target.

It seems that it wasn’t just weapons that were tested at Orford Ness. Allegedly, radio detection picked up a Soviet atomic test for the first time from the effect of the explosion on the ionosphere.

Many of the buildings from this time are clearly visible from miles away, notably the distinctive pagodas. Even though this is, presumably, yesterday’s technology, it still looks like something from a sci-fi movie – and just a teeny bit sinister. Walking about these parts of the Ness felt decidedly uncomfortable



at times, almost as though we were being watched. A suspicious-looking man was poking about in one wrecked and abandoned facility, a part that looked closed off to the public; I have no idea what he was doing, or how he got there, but he definitely didn't arrive, or depart, on the same boat that we did.

AWRE vacated Orford Ness in 1971.

From 1968 until it was shut down in June 1973, an Anglo-American project codenamed 'Cobra Mist' occupied a huge area on the northern edge of Orford Ness. This involved a top-secret over-the-horizon (OTH) backscatter (no, I don't know either) radar called System 441A. It was extremely expensive and apparently plagued by severe 'noise' (interference) from an unknown source from its inception, which ultimately led to its premature closure. The buildings were then allegedly used to house radio transmitters for the BBC World Service, but apparently no longer do so.

Frankly, who knows what went on at Orford Ness? That is part of the thrill of going there. It is certainly not your average visitor experience – there is no cosy café for a start. The experience begins as you wait on the quayside and there's a little frisson of excitement as you chug across the water and come ashore, which continues through the very necessary safety briefing. I shouldn't be at all surprised if the adrenalin pumped a little harder than usual all day, imagination working overtime and trudging across the muscle-wobbling shingle beach with the waves crashing. If it wasn't for the helpful information boards, I wouldn't have had a clue what I was looking at most of the time; but the boards do not explain everything.

Inevitably there are stories, ranging from UFOs to the apocryphal tale of a Nazi invasion near Shingle Street, at the tip of the spit, which was thwarted by a wall of fire. You do wonder what it must have been like to live nearby, though. Quite apart from having a large prohibited area on your doorstep, everyone would have known it was a prime target for attack. Unsettling.

From 1967 until 1985, bomb disposal teams worked to clear the site of unexploded ordnance. It is still not judged safe to wander off designated routes – and this might also damage some of the delicate habitats, of course. The National Trust acquired Orford Ness from the Ministry of Defence in 1993 and welcomed its first inquisitive visitors in 1995. It has undertaken a massive amount of work to conserve and restore the environment – clearly, an ongoing process. Grazing has been reintroduced. Deep-sea rod fishing once more takes place from the beach.

Orford Ness is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Ramsar site (the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources) and National Nature Reserve NNR

It is also a curious symbol of the 20th century: the conflicts, fear, waste, ingenuity, brilliance, effort, man hours – and how successive governments decided to spend our money.





For the greater part of the 20th century it was one of the most secret experimental military sites in the country. Here, armed guards – not commonplace in Britain – discouraged outside interest as boffins worked to challenge and change the course of events, or we know not what. Specialist, unique, structures were built to experiment, test and conceal; and then, it having been judged redundant, Orford Ness was abandoned. Now, the gaunt relics of its clandestine past are scattered across its often bleak landscape, like fading signposts to our recent history, while the flourishing wildlife gets on with survival.



In the distance we could see these
Strange buildings and radio masts